



# **The Augustan Succession: An Historical Commentary on Cassius Dio's Roman History Books 55-56 (9 B.C.-A.D. 14) (American Philological Association American Classical Studies)**

*By Peter Michael Swan*

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Written in the author's maternal Greek, the *Roman History* of the third-century A.D. historian Cassius Dio is our fullest surviving historical source for the reign of the Emperor Augustus. In *The Augustan Succession* Peter Michael Swan provides an ample historical and historiographic commentary on Books 55-56 of the History. These books recount Augustus's last twenty-three years (9 B.C.-A.D. 14), during which the aging monarch, amid dynastic tragedies and military setbacks, orchestrated the continuation of the constitutional and imperial system developed under his leadership, which ended in his transmission of power to his son-in-law Tiberius. *The Augustan Succession* is the first commentary since the eighteenth century to offer full and fresh treatment of this segment of Dio's work.

This commentary pays close critical attention to Dio's historical sources, methods, and assumptions as it also strives to present him as a figure in his own right. During a long life (ca. 164-after 229), Dio served as a Roman senator under seven emperors from Commodus to Severus Alexander, governed three Roman provinces, and was twice consul. An acute and interested contemporary observer of wide experience, positioned close to the seat of imperial power, he was a self-assured personality who embodied deeply conservative political and social views and prejudices. All these factors inform the pages of Dio's Augustan narrative, as does, above all, his doctrine that the best remedy for the troubles of his own age of "rust and iron" was rule on the model of Augustus. This is an historical commentary on Books 55-56 of Dio's *Roman History*. These books recount the last half of the reign of the Emperor Augustus, above all his orchestration of the first imperial succession. Addressed to both students and scholars, the new commentary is the first since the eighteenth century to offer full and fresh treatment of this segment of Dio's work.

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**Bibliography**

- Published on: 2004-06-17
- Released on: 2004-06-17
- Format: Kindle eBook

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"The commentary itself is sound and useful. It provides ample information about parallel sources, discussions in modern literature, legislation, dynastic problems within the Julio-Claudian family, geographical backgrounds and prosopographical details. An excellent historical commentary on Cassius Dio's books 55 and 56, which will be of great help to all students and scholars who study the last twenty years of Augustus' reign." --*Gnomon*

"[An] extremely thorough and useful new commentary.... This commentary has achieved its objective very well indeed. Scholars on a very wide range of topics within Augustan history have a valuable and well-designed new resource. Thanks to the generous scope Swan has given himself, this work is one of those commentaries that is a historical reference work in itself, above and beyond the purpose of explicating a given text. Anyone who needs to consult the relevant books of Dio for even a small reference ought certainly to consult Swan as well."--*Bryn Mawr Classical Review*

"With the publication of this commentary by Peter Michael Swan on books fifty-five and fifty-six of Dio, those consulting Dio on the Augustan era are very well served.... Any who consult Dio on Augustus will find themselves in Swan's debt."--*New England Classical Journal*

### **About the Author**

**Peter Michael Swan** is Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Saskatchewan. He is general editor of the series "An Historical Commentary on the Roman History of Cassius Dio."

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